

# Eukaryon

---

Volume 6 *Evolving Connections*

Article 7

---

3-1-2010

## The Kenneth L. Weik Undergraduate Life Science Symposium: A Professor Honored, A Tradition Begun

Paulius Kuprys  
*Lake Forest College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://publications.lakeforest.edu/eukaryon>

### Disclaimer:

Eukaryon is published by students at Lake Forest College, who are solely responsible for its content. The views expressed in Eukaryon do not necessarily reflect those of the College. Articles published within Eukaryon should not be cited in bibliographies. Material contained herein should be treated as personal communication and should be cited as such only with the consent of the author.

---

This Campus Outreach is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Lake Forest College Publications. It has been accepted for inclusion in Eukaryon by an authorized editor of Lake Forest College Publications. For more information, please contact [levinson@lakeforest.edu](mailto:levinson@lakeforest.edu).

## The Kenneth L. Weik Undergraduate Life Science Symposium: A Professor Honored, A Tradition Begun

### Paulius Kuprys

Department of Biology  
Lake Forest College  
Lake Forest, Illinois 60045



Participants and advisors gather for a group photo.

As I walked through the Johnson Bridge on November 10, 2009, to find my presenting area, I could see many Lake Forest College (LFC) students had already set up their posters. I glanced at them surprised to see such a wide variety of topics. They ranged from easily visible subjects such as sexual selection in guppies all the way down to microscopic subjects such as examining the mechanism by which Parkinson's disease operates. I found my spot and eagerly awaited the start of the symposium.

This year saw the advent of a new tradition in the LFC Department of Biology - The Kenneth L. Weik Undergraduate Life Science Research Symposium. Named after a faculty member who devoted time and heart to his students, this symposium serves as a forum for student presentations of scholarly work in the field of biology.

Kenneth L. Weik was a Professor of Biology here at Lake Forest College. He retired in 2001 after 34 years of dedicated work. Though retired, Professor Weik still enjoys teaching several non-major biology courses on campus. Luckily, I was able to catch up with Professor Weik for an informal interview.

While in high school, Professor Weik was interested in wildlife. He reminisced about how he and his family traveled outdoors where they hunted and fished. He hoped to one day have a career in the realm of fish and wildlife. Instead he chose a closely related career in botany. While many people associate botany with plants and flowers, Professor Weik's career in botany focused specifically on algae, a lower form of photosynthesizing organism.

Professor Weik was initially skeptical of being able to do any meaningful botanical research in an urban area like Lake Forest, but he soon found the surrounding area with its many rivers and close proximity to Lake Michigan quite suitable for his particular studies. All of these areas provided him with multiple suitable locations to study algae.

One of Professor Weik's favorite things about teaching botany was the opportunity to take field trips, where he and his students "botanized," that is, "collected samples." They frequented areas such as the Des Plaines River,

traveling by canoe and enjoying the sites while collecting algae samples. He enjoyed the field trips because they provided a variety of environments and an opportunity to study organisms up close.

With samples collected from the field, Professor Weik would return to Lake Forest to look at them under his favorite scientific instrument, the electron microscope, which was his pride and joy. The enjoyment he obtained from working with the electron microscope culminated in a biology course in which he taught students how to use electron microscopes. At one time LFC had four different electron microscopes, but only one remains now – no doubt eagerly awaiting Professor Weik's return.

When Professor Weik first started working at LFC, the Johnson Science building was half the size that it is today. With the new addition to the Johnson building, more space was allotted for research. Professor Weik compared LFC's biology department to one from a graduate school. After the addition, students were sticking around after class and coming in on nights and weekends to complete their research. According to Professor Weik, LFC is earnestly preparing biology majors for their future careers due to the many research opportunities open to undergraduates.

Professor Weik also served for a number of years as the faculty sponsor for Beta Beta Beta, the Biology Honor Society. Though many years have passed since then, Tri-Beta has not changed in its fundamental goal to keep the campus informed about the biological sciences, accomplished through the sponsorship of numerous lectures and seminars.

When asked how he felt having the symposium named after him, Professor Weik responded that he was truly humbled. His response not only showed in his words but also resounded in his solemn, contemplative facial expression. During his heart-felt speech at the symposium, he thanked the Department of Biology for bestowing this honor upon him. Other notable speakers were Lake Forest College President Stephen D. Schutt, and Dr. Kuei-Yuan Tseng from Rosalind Franklin Medical School. Both speakers congratulated Lake Forest College students on their excellent work and encouraged them to continue their research.

Prior to the institution of the Professor Weik Symposium, one of the few outlets for biology students to present their research is the Steven Galovich Memorial Student Symposium, which is open to all disciplines. While many biology students present their research at the Galovich Symposium, they "drown out" the other presenters. At last year's symposium there were approximately 25 biology-related presentations, representing nearly 20% of all presentations. The large number of presenters from the Department of Biology is not surprising considering the increasing numbers of biology students presenting their scholarly work outside the LFC community. Within the past five years the Department of Biology has sponsored over 100 student presentations at various conferences and symposia, vastly outnumbering other departments at the college. This large difference is noteworthy because presenting one's research is the primary mode through which biologists alert their colleagues to new findings. The new symposium will serve as a viable outlet and training ground for future researchers.

The increasing number of biology presenters is not the only reason for instituting the new symposium. New research vistas are opening up in the LFC locale. This year

many students from the Department of Biology took advantage of the research partnership available between the Rosalind Franklin Medical School in North Chicago and the department. Nine of the total nineteen presentations from Kenneth L. Weik Symposium involved research projects from Rosalind Franklin. The varieties of research projects available as well as the expertise of friendly, knowledgeable mentors are a few of the many reasons that undergraduate students are eager to undertake research there.

In retrospect of the first Kenneth L. Weik Undergraduate Life Science Research Symposium, I would like to report that it was a huge success. The Johnson Bridge was abuzz, overflowing with presenters, faculty, mentors, and students. The polished speeches and the intriguing research of the presenters kept listeners captivated and attracted people from the passing crowd. As the massive audience finished swarming alongside the posters and jabbing the presenters with questions, I felt pleased knowing that I had survived and also that I had contributed new information to the scientific community.

The Kenneth L. Weik Undergraduate Life Science Research Symposium will provide future LFC biology majors with opportunities to present their research and build fundamental skills needed to become reputable scientists. Professor Weik served the college and its students well, and I do not think there is a better way to thank him and to let him know how grateful past and present students of the Department of Biology are than by naming the new science symposium after him.

*Note: Eukaryon is published by students at Lake Forest College, who are solely responsible for its content. The views expressed in Eukaryon do not necessarily reflect those of the College. Articles published within Eukaryon should not be cited in bibliographies. Material contained herein should be treated as personal communication and should be cited as such only with the consent of the author.*